



## ***Renton Police Department***

# **Business Watch News**

January 2009

## **Phone Threats - with a Gun - to Businesses**



*You answer your business phone and the voice on the other end says, "I'm watching you and I have a rifle."*

*What would you do?*

This scene has been played out in businesses throughout the Puget Sound area in the past month. Restaurants, retail stores, and service industries have been targeted by suspect(s) who call and demand actions or information. Employees have been asked for—and have provided—their name, home address, cell phone number, the number of employees or patrons in the store, and sexually explicit information. Terrified, some employees have provided personal information or even followed instructions to walk outside alone or risk being shot.

Police have responded to each report and have conducted thorough searches of each business and the surrounding area. As of this writing, no suspect has been located—nor has anyone been injured.

While it would be more comfortable to assume the calls are a hoax perpetrated by wrongdoers, as prior calls have been, there is the possibility that a threat of this sort could be legitimate.

Every business is different, and the following suggestions should be tailored to suit your location and staff.

### **Educate your employees**

Your employees should know what suspicious activity looks (and sounds) like. Anyone asking questions about the number of employees on

duty, how many customers are in the business, opening and closing procedures, cash handling, or other proprietary information should be considered a potential threat. Employees should never share non-public business information or personal information with non-trusted sources. If an employee feels pressure to answer, she should provide fictitious information; it's unlikely the suspect will know if the information is accurate or not.



### **Is the threat credible?**

If the employee is comfortable doing so, asking questions can help determine if the threat is credible. The suspect's answer to questions such as, "Can you see that I'm walking to the window?" when in actuality the employee is standing in one place may indicate whether the suspect is actually watching the business. If you are unable to determine if the threat is credible, assume that it is—and act accordingly.

### **Protect yourself and others**

If the threat appears credible, have employees and customers move away from doors and windows to areas that are not visible from outside the business. Lock doors and windows, if it is possible to do so, and stay out of sight. Remain concealed until otherwise directed by police.

### **Report the threat**

Call 9-1-1 immediately. Provide as much information as possible to the responding officer, including a description of the suspect's voice, gender, sounds that were heard in the background, phone number from caller I.D., specific words or phrases the suspect used, and the demands the suspect made.

## Crimes Occurring on Business Property For the Month of December 2008

**COMMERCIAL ROBBERY:**

3800 block NE 4th St  
8:32 p.m.

The suspect pointed a gun at the employee and demanded she give him money. A K9 track was conducted but the suspect was not located. *Crime Prevention Tip: Keep the minimum amount of cash necessary to conduct business in the cash register. Post signs, such as "Less than \$50 in cash register," at business entries to deter would-be thieves.*

**LOSS**

unknown

200 block Rainier Ave S  
10:32 p.m.

Officers responded to an alarm. The suspect jumped over the counter, opened up a plastic bag he had brought with him, and demanded prescription drugs. He fled on foot, pursued by customers who were unable to catch him. Officers searched the area with negative results. *Crime Prevention Tip: Products that are frequent targets should be locked in a timed-access safe or a dual-keyed safe (with one key stored off site). Signs "advertising" these procedures may reduce the likelihood of this type of robbery.*

\$2,333

**COMMERCIAL BURGLARY:**

1200 block Union Ave NE

Suspect/s gained entry to the business by kicking in the door, then stole computers, printers, phones, and other office equipment. *Crime Prevention Tip: Exterior doors should be of solid metal or wood construction and fitted with deadbolt locks. The door frame should be tightly fitted and securely attached to the walls. A list of business equipment, including brand and serial number, should be maintained at an off site location; if the property is recovered, police are unable to return it to you without a serial number or other proof of ownership.*

**LOSS**

\$5,304

1200 block Union Ave NE

Suspect/s gained entry to the business, which had been burglarized the night before. Suspect/s removed the newly replaced office equipment (computer, monitor, and router.) *Crime Prevention Tip: See above.*

\$1,468

200 block Sunset Blvd N

A passerby reported broken glass and a door ajar at the business. The suspect/s had turned off the power to the building using the main switch, which was easily accessible and not locked, disabling the lights and surveillance cameras. Once inside, suspect/s broke into a display case and stole twenty digital cameras. A K9 search of the area revealed no suspects. *Crime Prevention Tip: Power switches and lines should be locked or otherwise secured to prevent access, and alarms should have a battery back up.*

\$1,000

4700 block NE Sunset  
Blvd

Suspect/s stole 12 full propane tanks, which were locked in a steel cage on a corner of the property. Suspect/s cut and removed the heavy-duty lock. Although the business has security cameras, the area of the business where the propane is stored is not well lit, and the theft could not be seen on the security video. *Crime Prevention Tip: During non-business hours, items of value should be stored inside a locked building whenever possible. Exterior storage areas should be well lit and under surveillance, and should be secured with case-hardened steel padlocks and heavy duty hardware.*

\$720

17000 block 116th Ave  
SE

Officers arrived within one minute of receiving a report of an alarm. The glass business door was shattered and officers could hear the glass still crackling in the frame. Suspect/s stole twenty packs of cigarettes, which were located right inside the door. A K9 track did not locate any suspects. *Crime Prevention Tip: Items of value should be stored away from the door to prevent rapid smash and grab burglaries. An application of Security Film can increase the strength of glass, necessitating more effort from the criminals to gain entry.*

\$103

## Crimes Occurring on Business Property in December (continued)

### COMMERCIAL BURGLARY:

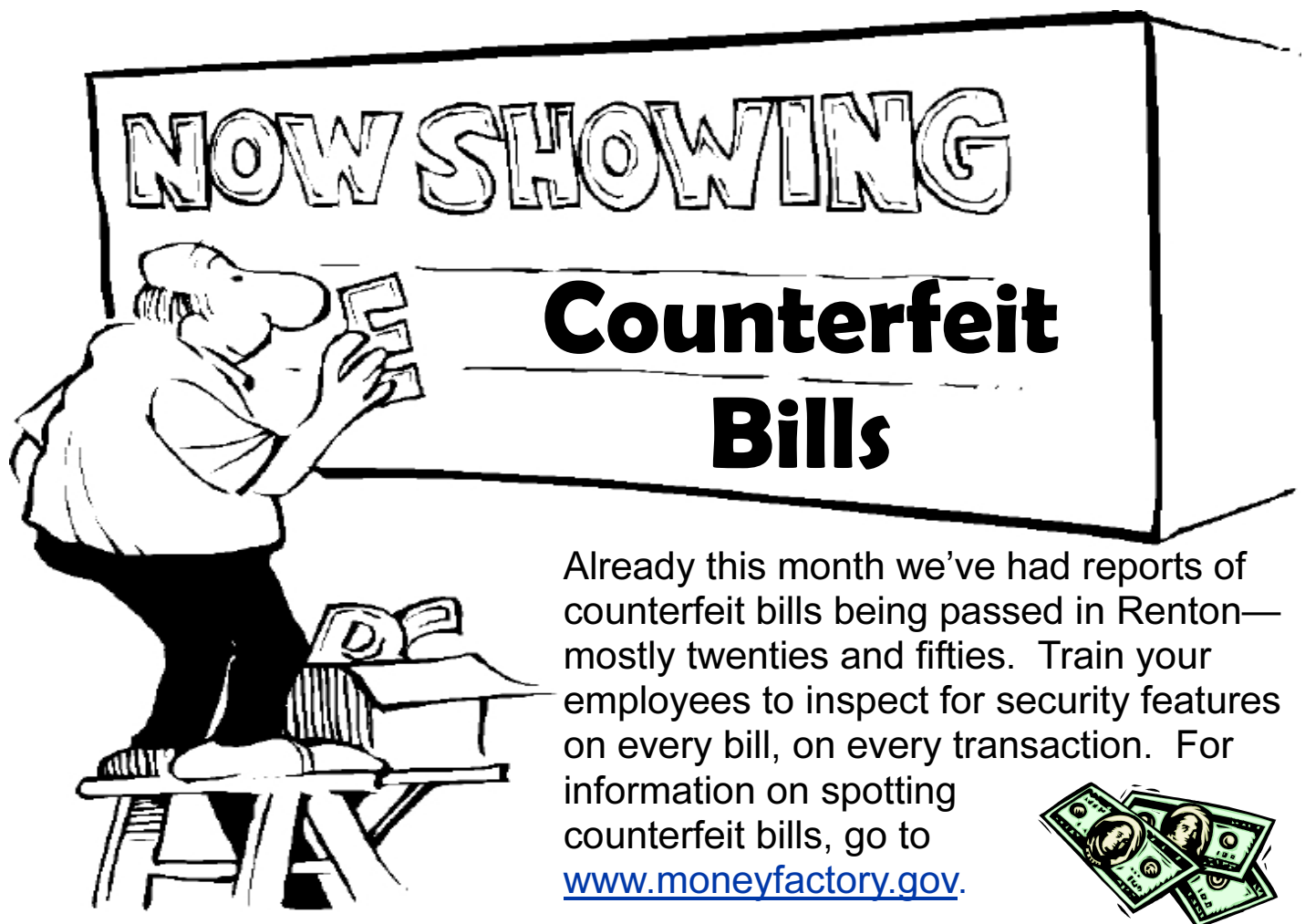
17200 block 128th Ave SE	Officers responded to a report of suspicious circumstances, where two subjects were seen exiting the business carrying bags. An area check did not locate the subjects. Ninety minutes later an employee called to report a burglary. Cash, checks, tools, and miscellaneous items had been stolen from the business. There was no sign of forced entry to the building, and the employee said the front door sometimes does not close all the way after being locked. <i>Crime Prevention Tip: Doors and windows should be inspected regularly, and those that do not close and lock properly should be repaired immediately. Only enough cash necessary to conduct business should be kept on hand.</i>	\$17,098
600 block SW Sunset Blvd	A computer, cash, checks and other items were stolen from the business while the owner was gone for lunch. There was no sign of forced entry to the business, and the owner thought he might have left the door unlocked. The suspect/s also stole the door key, which was in the door. The owner had the door locks changed the same day.  The next day, when the owner returned from lunch, a colleague advised him that a vehicle had entered the parking lot and the subject inside the vehicle appeared to be "casing" the business. The owner is concerned as the suspect vehicle returned to the building at the same time the burglary occurred the prior day, and the suspect in the burglary had stolen the keys. The license plate number from the suspect was provided by the colleague. <i>Crime Prevention Tip: All entrances to the business should be locked when not in use or not under constant view of an employee. Keys should be secured in a locked drawer or key box.</i>	\$1,370
2800 block NE Sunset Blvd	Business owner reports she arrived at her business to find the door unlocked and a bank bag and deposits missing. There was no sign of forced entry to the business. A possible suspect is an employee who was recently let go who had taken money from the business in the past, and "might" have had a key. <i>Crime Prevention Tip: Door locks, safe combinations, and alarm codes should be replaced whenever an employee leaves under ambiguous circumstances. Keep only the minimum amount of cash necessary to conduct business on hand. All cash and negotiable instruments should be secured in a locked safe that is bolted down.</i>	\$175
4700 block Lake Washington Blvd	A television and refrigerator were stolen from the business. It appears the suspect had "rigged" the door to disable the lock some time previously, so that forcing entry would not be necessary. It is unknown how the suspect removed the appliances without being observed. <i>Crime Prevention Tip: Doors and windows should be checked on a regular schedule to confirm they are locked.</i>	\$300
300 block Burnett Ave N	A passerby reported two subjects removing items from the business lot and loading them into a vehicle. Footprints in the snow indicate the suspects visited multiple locations on the business lot. The business owner was unsure what was missing from the business. <i>Crime Prevention Tip: When possible, all merchandise should be stored inside locked buildings. Exterior lots should be secured with chain link fencing that is topped with razor wire, and gates should be secured with steel hardened padlocks and industrial grade chains.</i>	unknown

*Auto Thefts: There were 52 cars reported stolen in Renton during the month of December 2008.*

*Auto Recoveries: Nine vehicles that were stolen outside the City were recovered in Renton during December 2008.*

RENTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

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Already this month we've had reports of counterfeit bills being passed in Renton—mostly twenties and fifties. Train your employees to inspect for security features on every bill, on every transaction. For information on spotting counterfeit bills, go to [www.moneyfactory.gov](http://www.moneyfactory.gov).